

Area couple's book tells story of Belleville history

By JUDSON BRANAM

Press Staff Writer

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BELLEVILLE — While longtime residents of a community often develop an interest in its history, not many are willing to invest large amounts of money and effort to see that history organized into a book.

Park and Edna Mae Gregory of Belleville are among the few who have undertaken such a project.

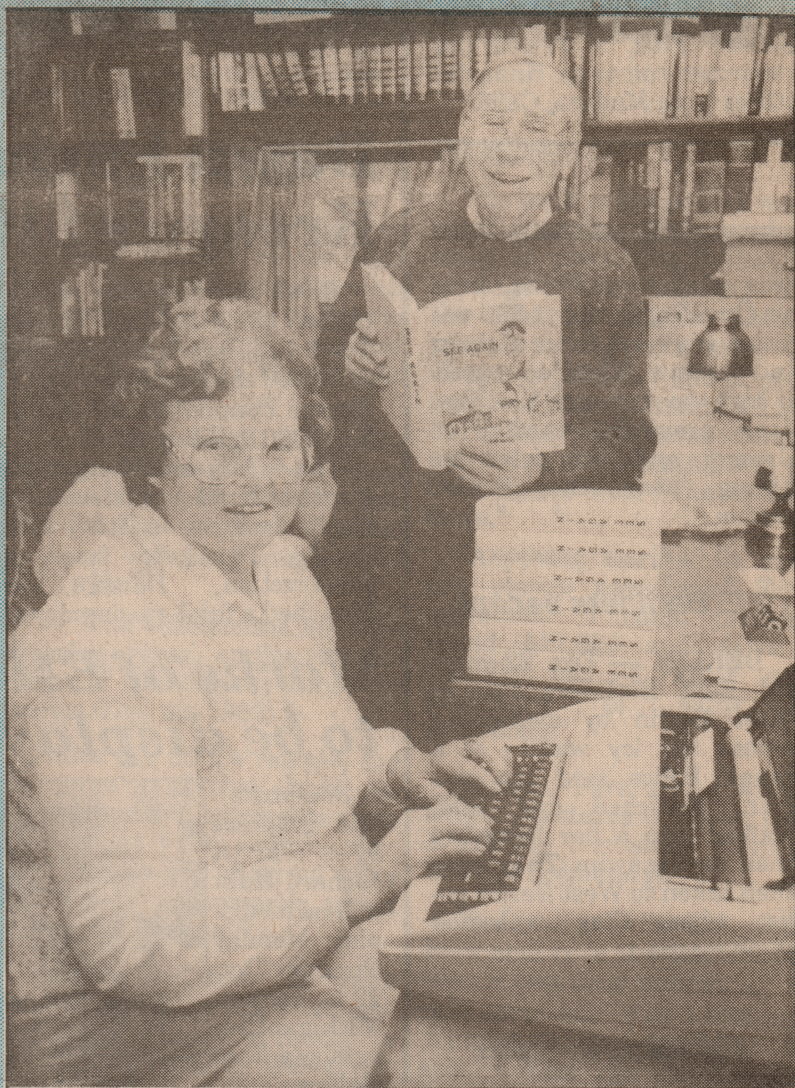
After many hours of research and an investment of more than \$20,000, their hopes of keeping Belleville's historical materials available to future generations were realized in September, with the publication of "See Again: A Pictorial History of Belleville."

The book relies on local newspaper accounts and governmental meeting minutes, along with 550 photographs, to tell Belleville's history through the last century.

In addition, several chapters deal with special events and aspects of the town's history, such as the Belleville High School fire of 1953; a transcribed tape of a 1976 luncheon in which 15 then-current and former city/village officials discussed their memories of the town; and photographs of all present-day businesses, churches and schools in town preserved for future historians.

It also includes the family trees of several longtime Belleville families.

Park said his favorite section of the book deals with an 1886 murder that happened on Main Street, when one participant in a barroom brawl that had spilled outside took



Press photo by Paul Hurschmann

The Gregorys at their home 'office' in Belleville.

a shot at another, striking a bystander. The intended target, Park said, was the grandfather of current Belleville City Council member Richard Akens.

To prepare the 540-page book, the Gregorys spent about a year and a half researching, compiling and typing full-time, after years of gathering material for its own sake.

"We're sort of history buffs," said Park, a retired

chemistry, physics and electronics teacher in the Belleville and Taylor schools, "so we'd latch onto something interesting and file it away, never thinking we'd put it into a book."

The idea of a book came about when the Gregorys looked for some photos they knew a late acquaintance had owned.

"His relatives had lost

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Russell Tish, a 34-year-old computer company financial officer from Madera, Calif.

OF TRUSTEES, work session, 7 p.m.,
 Civic Center, 7200 S. Huron River Drive.

OF TRUSTEES, work session, 7 p.m.,
Public center, 7200 S. Huron River Drive.
3042.

The book sells for \$23, which Park said is "a few pennies less than it cost us to publish it." He said about half of its 1,000-copy printing is still available for sale. Copies can be obtained from the authors, 375 Brain Ave., Belleville, 48111.